

6: Smith

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

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[For information on generational differences in attitudes toward, and application of discipline within the household unit, see Category 861.]

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YAMACRAW

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[115] mention this story to Carrie Hamilton,* whom we next visited.

"I hab beah uh dem people," said this seventy year old woman, who has the tall, heavy frame of a plantation hoe hand. "Muh mudduh use tuh tell me bout em wen we set in duh city mahket sellin vegetubbles an fruit. She say dat deah wuz a man an he wife an dey git fooled abode a slabe ship. Fus ting dey know dey wuz sole tuh a plantuh on St. Helena. So one day wen all duh slaves wuz tuhgedduh, dis man an he wife say, 'We gwine back home, goodie bye, goodie bye,' an jis like a bud dey flew out uh sight."⁹⁹

(845)
775 "Muh mudduh use tuh tell me all kine uh ting cuz I wuz bawn wid a caul⁴ an wuz diffrunt frum duh res. Ebry now an den I see ghos. Dey hab all kine uh shape, sometime no head, sometime no feet, jis floatin by."⁹⁹ Dey is duh spirits uh duh dead, but ef yuh dohn meddle in deah business, dey ain gwine meddle in yoze."

178 Not only among these older Yamacraw Negroes but among younger residents we found a solid background of ancestral beliefs and practices, for here little of modern progress has touched the dirt streets, pebbly walks, and tumble down houses of another day.

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• (593)
[115] Ellen Dorsey,** forty years old, born in Savannah, gave us a detailed description of the conjure her husband put on her.

"Me an him couldn git long so I lef im. He went tuh a root doctuh⁴⁸ fuh him tuh make me come back home. Den duh root doctuh put me down sick so duh wite people I wuz wukin fuh would dischahge me. I had pains runnin up an down muh whole body, an I knowed I wuz cunjuhed but uh wouldn gib in."¹⁵ I call me in a man who use tuh try tuh sell me a han tuh wawd off cunjuh.^{12a, c, d} He rub muh legs down twice a day, an one mawnin a big black snake run outuh muh big toe.⁵⁰ 'Deah goes duh devil,' say duh root man, an frum

* Carrie Hamilton, 530 West President Street.

** Ellen Dorsey, 515 West Congress Street.

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SPRINGFIELD

353 a "spirit picture," showing the head of one of the creatures of the "ahadduh worl." The eyes are closed, the face bears a rapt, exalted expression, and the picture fades off into a dim mist of clouds.

791 Washington uses no cards or crystals. "I kin tell duh
787 fewchuh jis by lookin at duh pusson," ^{22a} he told us, "cuz I wuz bawn wid a double cawl ⁴ wut wuz sabe fuh me till I wuz grown. Duh spirit show me ebyting. Ain many people hab duh powuh tuh see tings, but I got dis gif frum Gawd.

789 "I hab a deep knowledge uh magic. Deah's magic wut
754 gahd yuh frum hahm an deah's ebil magic wut kin put yuh down sick aw eben kill yuh.⁸ Wen yuh bin fix, yuh caahn git well wid regluh medicine.¹⁵ Yuh got tuh git a han gense duh fixin.⁶ Magic roots hep a lots.⁴⁸ Duh haiah is one uh duh mos powful tings yuh enemy kin git hole uh ¹⁰ cuz it grow neah duh brain an a han made outuh haiah kin sho affec duh brain."

754 The credulous neighbors constantly seek Washington's
791 aid, for there is much talk of conjure among them. His recent acquittal on a charge of assault and robbery was interpreted as evidence that he possessed the ability to "fix duh cote so dey couldn nebuh sen im up."

754 We were told of a woman who had a spell cast upon her by
• (593) her own sister.¹⁵ Wishing to verify our information, we decided to pay the unfortunate victim a visit.

(351) The house stood at the dead end of a narrow street. A high wall separated it from its neighbors and the barren ground encircling it was littered with refuse, tin cans, and large piles of rocks. A fierce looking dog prowled restlessly near the high arched gateway and bared his teeth at the intruders. At our request a neighbor obligingly called over the fence to the sick woman,^{*} who a moment later came limping towards us.

* Ryna Bryant, Springfield.

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DRUMS AND SHADOWS

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(301) Her age was uncertain; she was gaunt and sickly in appearance. Her outfit consisted of a dull gray waist with a turban to match and a faded blue skirt. Large brass earrings dangled from her ears, making her lean face appear still more woebegone. Certainly there was something wrong with the woman, for she dragged listlessly with the effort of walking the short distance from the house.

We inquired about her health but when we asked about the "cunjuh" which had been put upon her, she looked at us distrustfully, saying, "Muh huzbun tell yuh bout dat." With that she left us abruptly.

(291) Soon the man * appeared, a bent figure in ragged blue overalls, with a battered felt hat on his grizzled head. Unlike his wife, Stephen Bryant was talkative and friendly, and he told us readily of his wife's strange predicament. "She wuz cunjuh'd by uh own sistuh," he began. "Some days she all right an kin cook an clean up; den all at once tings git tuh runnin all obuh uh body.⁵ Sometimes she fall down an hab tuh be put tuh bed."

We asked Stephen if he had consulted any root doctors ⁴⁸ about his wife's condition and he said, "I hab monuh dozen root doctuh's tuh uh but dey dohn do uh no good. I keep on tryin an maybe some day I fine duh right un tuh reach duh cunjuh."

In this instance retribution seemed to have come swiftly, for Stephen told us that the sister who had caused the conjure was now "laid up uhsef wid cunjuh, fuh someone cas a spell on huh too."

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776 When we asked Stephen if he believed in evil spirits, he nodded in affirmation. "I sees um all duh time," he said. "Dey is lill an wite an hab no head.^{54, 55} Yuh nebul see um till attuh duh sun gone down. Yuh dohn bodduh um none an dey leab yuh lone.

"Deah use tuh be a ole house right pas ours. Ebry night

* Stephen Bryant, Springfield.

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DRUMS AND SHADOWS

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777 had known of people who were "fuhbid tuh eat eel fish mong
udduh tings." 66

115 Our visit was such a pleasant one that we stayed for a
while longer to talk. The household was an unusually con-
tented and peaceful one. The old couple were apparently
(737) satisfied with a simple scheme of existence although Alec did
venture the usual remark regarding his old-age pension.
"Sho would lak tuh hab it, missus. Mebbe yuh kin git dem
gubment folks tuh see dat I gits it."

581 When we were about ready to leave, a middle-aged daugh-
587 ter, who had been lingering at the gateway, came up and
joined the group. She confided that she had been married to
one man for thirty years, but that he had died and she had
recently remarried. This second marriage was evidently not
• (593) so successful, for she said, "Dis huzbun ain lak duh fus one.
He's triflin an ain sech a good providuh. Wen I loss duh
fus huzbun, I sho loss ebryting."

593 At that time Rachel and Alec had been married for fifty-
115 seven years and during all this period there had been few
differences or unpleasant happenings. As Alec escorted us
to the car he told us of his high regard for his wife, assuring
us in conclusion, "I ain nebuch had no trouble wid uh. Ain
so much as tech uh wid a pocket hankuhchuh sence I done
bin had uh."

115 A little later we went to visit Susan Maxwell,* who was
sitting on the porch of her house when we drove up. She
was about ninety-two years old and, having been ill recently,
was snugly wrapped up in a variety of garments.

342 The house, she told us, was about one hundred years old.
A hall ran from the front to the back part, and from the back
porch a passage led to a lean-to kitchen. A barn near the
(343) house was about to collapse from age and lack of repair.
In the yard a black ox lay chained under a tree and a large

231 * Susan Maxwell, Possum Point.

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Social Structure 23

621 given island in order to be accepted as a natural member of the commu-
602 nity. Members who are brought to the islands as spouses are recog-
nized as members by association with a known island family; but even
one who has been married to an islander for twenty or more years
never achieves the status of a full member of the community.

621 Membership is most often established through oral transmission of
602 lineage, as opposed to birth certificates or other documents. Thus one
613 is expected to know one's lineage, for this knowledge can mean the
difference between acceptance and rejection in any social setting. It is
normal protocol, for example, for a young person to undergo seem-
ingly intense interrogation by an older island resident who wishes to
place the younger person. If one can explain satisfactorily who one's
parents are, who one's parents' parents are, or even who one's cousins'
parents are, then kinship is established and one is viewed as a member
of the community to be accorded all due warmth and hospitality. The
islanders can be chilly and sometimes openly hostile to strangers,
black or white, who have no local kinship ties or affiliations.

(609) As would be expected in such closed communities, familial ties,
596 marriages, and the concept of the extended family are taken with ut-
most seriousness. The extended family is an African-like social tradi-
tion on the Sea Islands, just as it is in most inland black communities;
acknowledging and readily accepting the obligations and responsi-
bilities due not only to one's spouse but also to one's spouse's family is
a part of island culture. The "conjugal bond is strong and literally lasts
581 until death parts the spouses," and common-law marriages are as valid
588 and stable in the eyes of the community as those marriages contracted
586 under law. There is a low incidence of divorce and separation. Dis-
agreements and conflicts do arise in Sea Island households, of course,
as they do in any household. But understanding and accepting the rela-
• 593 tionships inherited in an extended family appear to alleviate many of
596 the conflicts experienced in the sort of nuclear family that is charac-
teristic of European cultures, such as mother-in-law/daughter-in-law
(818) antagonism. Like the members of extended families in Africa, people
on the Sea Islands act with deference toward their elders, and most
elders accord a great degree of respect to young adults, especially
those with children. That is, conflicts are minimized because each
member acknowledges and respects the others' domains.⁴⁴

582 Most of the inhabitants of any given island are related; thus mar-
600 riage between persons from the same island is not encouraged. Chil-

538 skilled speakers as well as dancers and singers, while women are expected to be responders, doing the clapping and rhetorical backup.

462 Though some women do tell tales, they most often do so in the privacy of their homes when the men are away. Likewise, the Igbo, Yoruba, (171) and Ibibio women seldom tell tales in the company of men, although alone, or in the company of other women and children, some of the Sea Island and African women are avid storytellers.

538 On occasions when a storytelling contest was held at the community store during my stays on the islands, many women came to hear the stories, though few of them actually told tales themselves. Miss Myma, the elderly Sea Island lady with whom I resided and who accompanied me to most preplanned telling sessions, always told the first tale, but more in an effort to sanction and add approval to the occasion than as a traditional practice. Several women with whom I had spent time over a seven-year period came to the storytelling contest but bluntly refused to tell any stories. After the session ended and the men

538 were awarded the prizes by the island judges, these women approached me and asked that I come by their homes the following day. I did so and was told many tales, as well as given many folk remedies, cures, and songs. One lady, highly respected in the community, permitted me to hold two storytelling contests at her home. However, she refused to come outside to listen to the tales because the audience was comprised primarily of men. I learned that women are not expected to participate in activities that are considered primarily male-oriented activities. (562) Within the Sea Islands as well as within certain African communities, only women who are elderly or held in fairly high social esteem can participate in such activities without fear of censure.

538 Most of the tales told by women and elderly men are told during the daylight hours just after lunch when they take a break from the daily chores just to "catch some breeze" or "sit in the cool." One elderly gentleman, nearly one hundred years old now, often entertained me for hours with tales, historical events, and reminiscences before he resumed his afternoon plowing with his favorite mule. This man is particularly interesting because he firmly believes that a man should live apart from his wife and family. Until his wife's death very recently, she lived in a fairly large, modern dwelling with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren while he lived in his shanty located behind the main house and near the other homes within his yard area. His wife prepared his meals and brought them to him at

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40 The Folk Literature

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• 593 mealtimes and then returned to her own home. Since her death, his granddaughter has continued the practice.

538 Another elderly friend and informant often sat in the hallway of his shanty, with the front and back doors open to let the breeze flow through the house, and told of Ber Rabbit and times past in vivid detail. Sometimes it seemed that Ber Rabbit was indeed a real character to him, one he had actually encountered and greeted on his many journeys down Sea Island paths.

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177 The Sea Island children are aware of the "old-time stories" such as those about Ber Rabbit and his many companions, but most under the age of twelve told me stories that they had learned in school, and not those characteristic of the Sea Island tradition. Television and improved educational facilities account in part for this change. However, the skill in telling and the ability to retain the old-time stories appear to be related to the degree of modernization of the island. On the more remote islands, including Wadmalaw and Daufuski, many children are avid and skillful storytellers in the old tradition.

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171 Nonetheless, few Sea Island children between the ages of eight and twelve can match the skill and intricate detail in description that the Igbo, Yoruba, and Ibibio children display in captivating an audience and unraveling a tale. Though color television is a common sight in Nigerian cities like Lagos, Aba, Owerri, Calabar, and Eket, the village children are far less likely to have access to television or radio. As would be expected, these children are far more expert in the art of telling a story than even Nigerian city children, probably because village children are still gathered and told stories frequently as a form of entertainment.

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461 Anytime was a good time for the African children to tell stories. But, as on the Sea Islands, the best stories were told in the late evening around the fire sites when a good group had come together to relax and be entertained after the activities of the day were ended.

The Audience

596 Today, as noted earlier, the extended family is still a practiced tradition on the Sea Islands. The inhabitants, like their West African forebears, seem to be communal people. They live in close proximity

Mr. William Saunders

GOING TO NEW YORK IS AN ADVANTAGE
AND A DISADVANTAGE

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Most people think about their kids. It's so hard raising kids in New York. And it's so easy for kids to go bad there. So most of the kids are left here with the grandparents while the parents are in New York working, and when they get a certain age they think about it. And they rebel. They find something bad to do. They try to get back somehow at their parents.

(855)
(603)
Most of the people that go away from here leave their kids. If the wife and the husband are going to be working, they have nobody to care for the kids, so they leave them home. And the grandparents have gotten to a certain age, they raised their kids, and they're so much more lenient on their grandkids than they were on their own kids. So this is one of the real big problems, I think. The kids suffer.

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I was born in New York. I was one of these babies that was shipped here—not even somebody bringing me, they used to put tags on you and just put you on the train and say where you're supposed to get off at. I was raised by my grandparents and actually when a grandparent raise a kid, there are two generations between, and there's so much less understanding there. Things that the parents would probably understand, the grandparents cannot understand. And this was my problem.

This is something that is still going on, and I think it's gonna be going on and on. And this is one of the things that the Negroes have really been suffering from—this grandparents raising the children and the children not getting actually what they need. I believe if a kid really wants something, like he wants music lessons or he wants to study farming, or anything, if they say that they want to do it, I think that somebody should be there to help them with it. So even if they fail, they can't say, "I didn't have the opportunity." I think he should have the right to try, and if he fails, he can't blame nobody but himself because he just couldn't make it.

But like me now, I can sit back and blame my grandparents and my parents for not being successful. I don't know, I just feel to me that I could have been somebody. And I got somebody to blame for not being somebody.

Kids here need an opportunity.

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Going to New York is a disadvantage and an advantage. To live I think it's a disadvantage. Some things are lacking here, but the children have a home. So we don't have everything that we want for them. But they have their home, so all they need is to get along like everybody else—daily living.

121 have left the island, or they maintain separate households.
861 The end result might mean greater uniformity in discipline
596 attitudes among Sea Islanders in general and particularly
those in extended family situations.

121 The most uniform discipline patterns may occur in
861 families where mothers have clearly defined discipline
593 roles, and when grandparents are members of the household.
596 While the more common report that maternal grandparents are
603 generally more involved in the rearing of grandchildren than
paternal grands, the presence of either grandparents in the
household may result in more uniform application of discipline
punishment(s).²⁰ Despite reports that grandparents
tend to reject roles as disciplinarians of grandchildren,
in the Black extended family situation grandparents may be
much more active in this role. If the mother has no, or
has an inconsistent discipline role, maternal grandparents
may tend to be more permissive than paternal grandparents.
This assumption is based upon the generally closer affiliation
and attitudinal similarities between mother and her
parents than between father and his parents. As a general
view both paternal and maternal male grandparents may tend
to be more restrictive of grandchildren than female grandparents.
This trend would tend to be effected and modified

²⁰ Edward Apple, The Social Structure of Grandparent-
hood, Amer. Anthropologist 58 (1956) 56-63.

121 in light of mother's discipline role.²¹ As an overall
861 judgement, extended families may tend to have the more
593 restrictive discipline pattern. This assumption is based
596 on the relationship between family living space and disci-
603 pline behavior. Sea Island homes tend to be small and con-
fining which should allow for further test of this rela-
tionship.

121 Isolated Sea Island parents may use physical punish-
861 ment in disciplining more than parents living nearer to
621 mainland. This tendency may be anticipated for two reasons:
(1) Sea Islanders may occupy lower positions on the socio-
economic scale than mainland parents, (2) Sea Island com-
munities are cohesively structured. This community cohe-
siveness is reflected in their practice of the discipline
philosophy of two for one. Under this practice any mis-
behaving child can be disciplined by any member of the com-
munity. As the practice goes, after disciplining the child,
the neighbor reports the child's misbehavior to the parent.
The parent in turn has the responsibility of thanking the
neighbor for a good deed. After which the child is again
beaten on two accounts: (1) because of the misbehavior and
(2) because the child's misbehavior has cast "bad light" on
the parent.

²¹ R. S. Tach, The Role of the Father in the Family,
Journal of Experimental Education, 20, 1952, 319-361.

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[777]
[593] mannerism of the child was extremely unjust. They say the teachings of the Lord make clear that if the parent blindly follows the bully path results in the child losing respect. In this belief, parents with guided deliberation employ the discipline interaction.

[577] It must be emphasized that these interactions are just not that frequent. Gullah children are respectful and obedient, behaviors which are less than that are not tolerated. In turn rarely does the Gullah parent discipline the child who has been socialized properly.

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177 The Gullah parent on the nearer islands agreed that the properly socialized child is not a problem. This child is on the right path. But they are concerned about factors in the environment which act to make for proper rearing of children increasingly difficult. As these parents see it and as was supported by the study, on the nearer islands the effects of greater exposure to mainland life styles makes it increasingly difficult to rear children to "the proper" levels of obedience. Elder Richardson explains the situation this way: "d paren should be shami while d roun en de high skire, lib en n out of sin. D chillin got no choice dan ta act lik d paren. It ain't d chilln falt mind ya, it d blame ob d paren. Dey responsible fer d chill, dey must brin d chil ta d wae ob d bible. I jus dan't no want goina happen ta d chilln ta dae. Ef d paren dan't see ta

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177 it quik, dey is head fer d fira en brim stan. But it ain't
dey falt."

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177 The relationship being described here explains the
higher tolerance of today's parents and is explicable in
part by generational differences and in part by the exposure
element-distance from mainland. In the case of exposure,
the more distant Gullah families are more isolated from the
mainland socializing influences. An effect of this more
limited exposure is more adherence to "the discipline habits
of ole." This adherence was reflected in the lower toler-
ance (reaction ratio) of parents on the distant islands.
In further explanation, the work habits of women on the
near islands contribute to their being the most tolerant
parents. The occupational habits of these women frequently
take them into the households of White families of higher
economic status. When this Gullah parent is exposed to an
alternate discipline pattern, this exposure may then
underly the differences in tolerance found between sexes
and islands.

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184 The tolerance of differences may only be a function of
exposure time. The case here is that parents who are en-
gaged in the work force spend less time with their children
than do elder parents. Hence the working parent would not
be as quick to react to disobedience on the part of children
than would grandparents who are actively engaged in child

593 rearing for longer periods each day. Women on the more
861 distant islands are less likely to be engaged in work out-
184 side the home. They also showed the tendency to be less
[177] tolerant than mothers on the near islands. This relation-
ship adds supports to the rationale that exposure to main-
land social patterns, and the daily duration of inter-
actions with children are key elements in the measured
differences in the discipline habits of women both across
generations and islands. It might also be added that the
work habits of the women on the nearer islands both in
terms of the nature of the labor and its consequence of a
higher income base also contributes to the differences.

592 However this is not the total explanation. It is also
184 important to consider that the more isolated Gullah families
857 place more emphasis on the assignment to children of chores
861 which were central to the operation of the family unit.
[867] These tasks rather than being assigned to provide the child
with a sense of responsibility are assigned on the assump-
tion that the child already has competent work habits.
Consider for the moment the child whose task is to draw
water, to cut wood and handle the chicken coop. If the
child neglects these chores there would indeed be serious
consequences. For this neglect would noticeably disturb
the operations of the household. These households on the
more distant islands being supplied only with wood burning

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stoves would come to a halt if wood was not cut in time for meals to be prepared. On the near islands with household supplied with only gas stoves or with both, the child's negligence would not have such dire consequences. In view of this it is easy to see how the chores of children on the far islands would be a more serious matter, and why such households tend to operate on an everytime reaction ratio.

• (593) In contrast, parents on the near islands can more afford the gift of tolerance toward neglected chores, and to react to disobedience on a sometime basis.

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Differences across the generations were much more frequent than across island and sex. The element which underly much of the differences was "on ma dae" references of parents and elder parents. The way this works is that each parent tries to rear children like they were reared. The demands of the environment in which grandparents were reared differ from the household patterns under which parents were reared. The main differences other than that of exposure were in labor habits. Grandparents were reared in farming households. Consequently as children, the grandparents were up before day-break and actively engaged in burdensome farm labor. In these farming households the tasks and responsibilities of children were even more clearly defined than they are today or in the childhood of the present parent generation. Similarly the consequences

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of not completing tasks were harsh because chores were meaningful to the household. It is reference to this agrarian life and the demands for the obedience of children upon which grandparents draw. That the generation of parents now share significantly different childhood references than their parents merely illustrates the component of change in the agricultural habits on the islands. In agreement with this, parents reared in more distant households, where the farm habit is comparatively more active tend to mirror the views of the preceding generation. A similar positive relationship between exposure to the farming habit and the cohesiveness of discipline behavior across the two generations exist on the near islands. The generational differences found in this study can certainly be attributed to the farming versus non-farming pattern. This rationale was expressed vividly by Grand Flower, who at 78 years sees big differences in the rearing habits of her day and those of today. "Billie, let me tell ya son, we haad no timb fer foolin. Wen d cock taak en bernean we up wote de fas cro. I go ta git d waata en me sista she gix d wod. Wey be fa d life ob dae comin we haad d bakfas redi. Abta we done wote d poz en plata wen goin ta d fiel. Dey we waak puen sed en d grun or piken en pulen dat wat den redi, we dey til d timb com n fer fix d supa den bak ta dat huse we goin. We gix d mel fer d men fak, den we carie it ta d fiel we

sta en d fiel til d lite nea goin. Billie, ma un I tel ya
day no timb fer d chillin to b disobedient."

Today's children are not reared in the farm habit.

Few of the parents have had long to exposure to the pat-
terns in which the elders were reared. It is consequently
the differences in exposure and work habits which underly
changes in the generational views of Gullah parents. The
significance of differences in the discipline view of the
two generations illustrates not only that the "en ma dae"
reflections of parent and elder parent differ, but it is
also a measure of the direction of change. Grandparents
were the most frequent to respondent "ma paren use beatin
everytime," while parents and children said often and
sometimes more frequently. As a matter of fact, twice
as many parents cited they were punished sometime than did
elders. The direction of change between the generations
is clearly that in each subsequent generation parents are
less apt or as quick to punish the child.

Still another point to be considered in looking at
the relative tolerance of the female parent is that of role
differences. Males consistently cited fighting as one of
the chief reasons for being disciplined. On the other hand
not getting the chores done was a prime reason for discipli-
ning girls. This is explained in that males had few
household responsibilities and were not disciplined for

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

592 The Sea Island family is a cohesive unit. Many of the
178 tested generational relationships were significant. These
177 differences between generations were primarily attributed
to effect of changing economic patterns, and rates of expo-
sure to mainland patterns. The island work force are now
464 engaged primarily in 9-5 work patterns. The pattern takes
177 this force into job situations in metropolitan Charleston.
861 While the island men tend to work in clusters in the dif-
ferent industries in the region, women are heavily engaged
in domestic service work. The projected results are that
women because of the nature of their employment were much
more exposed and consequently influenced by the tolerant
discipline habits of Whites and mainlanders. In contrast,
the clustering work habits of males, in which members of
families are employed by the same employer has operated to
negate the influence of the new work pattern on male par-
ents. The more demanding work requirements which accom-
panies the maintenance of a farm habit was also discussed.
It was said that the farm habit upon which the elder is-
landers base their discipline references was unknown to

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● 593 the island children. The parents themselves have been away from this habit for nearly as many years as they were engaged in it. Consequently, the stern disciplinary demands of the farm habit was not being transferred to this generation of young islanders. In this light, the childhood histories of the elder parents was discussed. It was seen how the harsh work habits required in farming families demanded the obedient behavior of children. Under the burden of farm labor, parents were less tolerant of disobedience than parents are today. The reason given was again differences in occupation. It was also said that parents living in isolated communities were apt to discipline children more quickly than parents who have jobs, because they spend time with their children. For the farming parents, the fatigue element was said to diminish their tolerance level, and that isolated households operate in an everytime reaction ratio. These religious beliefs were introduced as elements which influence frequency and methods of discipline. Gullah Island parents, in this vain, strived to rear children under, and by guidance of the Bible. In discussing the sex role differences, parents tend to more rigidly enforce discipline on female children. This relationship was explained along two lines. The first was the status that the male child has on the islands. Here a dominance of females places a premium upon male children.

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African Survivals on the Coast of Georgia

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000 How are you, brother?" The reply is: "So-so, Cranman. How are you, brother?"
 751 The writer explains that "It does not do to claim that one is feeling too well, other-
 781 wise the enmity of the spirits might be incurred." From this it can be seen why
 793 there was a wide divergence between Lowman's words and his performance, and
 796 also why our older Negroes always appear to enjoy poor health.

Another tradition caused me to be embarrassed for the poor preacher, who
 793 seemed to have a strange affliction. I furtively looked around to see how the
 531 younger members of the congregation were taking the curious performance. Their
 matter-of-course attitude should have made me less innocent. However, it was not
 until I heard other preachers give the same effect—the mewing of a harassed cat
 combined with the bark of a half-strangled dog—that I realized my ludicrous mis-
 take. At the peak of the preacher's harangue the words pour out so fast that he has
 no time to get his breath, and his gasping efforts cause the outrageous sounds that
 appear to have no name with us, but which are described by Martha Beckwith, in
 Black Roadways, under the name of "trooping."²³ She believes that the exercise "if
 531 persisted in, will produce that semiconscious condition so favorable to the commu-
 539 nication of spirits." But it has always seemed to me that religious ecstasy is itself the
 781 source of the strange manifestation. When the preacher has reached his rhythmical
 796 best; when an insistent tapping of toes on the floor provides an under-current of
 sound along with a feeling of uncanny suspense; when the "moaning" (as the pec-
 789 uliarly beautiful humming of the Negroes is called) takes on an elemental quality
 786 that comes from everywhere and from nowhere in particular—then the snapping
 796 point is reached for someone, and you hear a piercing shriek. A woman stands up
 with stark, stiff arms stretched high above her head. If she makes much of a com-
 motion she is supported into the open air to recover. When I was a little child
 I saw a woman who had gone into this rigid state carried to a pump beside the
 church, where, under the spout, she was quickly brought to her senses. In the House
 of Prayer in Savannah (where the pillars are thickly padded, and the sawdust is
 inches deep on the floor) I saw a "lone shouter" fall into a trance that lasted half

(191) ²³ It is possible that the tradition was carried to Jamaica by Elder George Lisle, the former
 slave of Mr. Sharp, a loyalist of Savannah, who gave him his liberty. Lisle preached in Georgia
 during the Revolution. At the close of the war he went to Jamaica. Though an ex-slave, he
 organized, in Kingston in 1784, the first Baptist church on the island, and became "the chief
 human factor in the salvation of Jamaica." (L. G. Jordan, Negro Baptist History in the United
 States.)

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567 burden upon the parents, for the master provided for all
585 children alike. A violation of marriage vows was accom-
837 panied by no disgrace or punishment other than that in-
567 flicted by the master or by the church if the culprit were
(144) a member. There seems to have been very little intimacy
between the white men and the Negro women on St.
Helena Island. The northern missionaries found not
more than five or six mulattoes on the whole Island in
1861.

567 There were forces sufficiently strong to keep many
581 slaves faithful to their marriage vows. Chancellor Har-
per, of Charleston, called attention in 1854 to the fact that
slave marriages were often faithfully adhered to during
567 life.²² In 1857 a sea-island planter, in recounting the
581 deaths among his people, mentioned with sadness that of
•593 "poor old Sandy and his wife Joan." "The latter died
(165) apparently of mere debility; and her husband, after watch-
ing until her death, went to bed at midnight, complaining
merely of a sore throat, and expired the next evening with-
out any one suspecting that he was seriously ill." The
planter concluded that the faithful old man had died of
"mental depression, operating on a feeble constitution."²³
On Edisto Island there still lives "Old Jeff," born in
slavery, who, although as devoted to his wife as Sandy,
lived on after her death. Every day he went to her grave
to mourn and there he slept at night. After several
months his friends became alarmed at his behavior. Upon
being questioned he explained that he intended to dig up

²² "Memoir on Slavery," DeBow, *Industrial Resources of the United States*, II, 219.

²³ Couper-Wyllie Papers, James Hamilton Couper to James Couper, April 13, 1857.

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his wife's bones and take them to his house so that he could have 'he wit' me always."²⁴

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FAMILY LIFE

In their attempt to impress the sacredness of marriage upon their slaves, the whites were often discouraged by the low value which the slave women placed upon chastity. Wives were as prone as husbands to break the marriage vows. In fact, the female tended to be the dominant sex in slave life. It was decidedly to the advantage of a black man to have the good will of one of the women of the plantation, for life thereby was made much easier. On the plantations where clothes were issued by the yard, it was customary for the women to do the sewing for the family so that a husband was almost as dependent upon his wife for a new suit of clothes as he was upon his master; but, on the plantations where superannuated women were delegated to do all the plantation sewing and mending, the slave men were somewhat more independent of their women.

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The weekly issuance of rations, a predominant portion of which was corn, was also dealt out in the bulk and must not only be shelled but pounded into grits before being cooked. It was customary for the women and children to assemble at the cornhouse on Monday, an hour or so before "fust dark," to receive the weekly allowance from the driver. Kneeling or sitting upon the ground with her children about her, each woman shelled the corn, using a cob to increase her speed. On some of the plantations there were improvised mortars for shelling corn, made of

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²⁴ Information obtained from J. Swinton Whaley, Little Edisto, S. C., and from a personal interview with the Negro.

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her husband's pails which they took to the field with them for dinner.³⁰

If the wife were frugal, she might have a portion of the weekly rations left when Monday came around again, and these she might either feed to her pigs and chickens or sell to the overseer or to an island storekeeper. The money was hers to use for the good of the family, but it was hers, nevertheless. It was the woman of the family who, with the aid of her children, worked most of the family patch, and it was usually the woman who marketed the produce and pocketed the money received in exchange.

The planters helped to make of woman the dominant sex in the family life of the slave by the position which they gave her in the plantation regime. The cabin was hers. The children, too, were listed on the plantation records as belonging to the mother. Seldom was the father's name indicated. Thus a person might go through life known as Binah's Toby or Moll's July. Likewise the mother had the privilege of naming the new baby unless she graciously yielded the right to its father or to a friend or relative. In this right she often exercised a singular taste, for one child might be called Jupiter, another Quash, a third January, and a fourth Hard Times.

Miss Towne was amused at the jealousy of their "natural rights" which the men on St. Helena Island began to show after that region had come under the jurisdiction of the Federal Army during the Civil War. "Political freedom they are rather shy of, and ignorant of," she

³⁰ Some planters, as it has already been pointed out, delegated plantation cooks to prepare the noon meal for the field hands so that they might have something hot to eat at this time. Some planters also allowed an hour's rest at nine o'clock for breakfast.

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• 593 wrote, "but domestic freedom—the right just found, to have their own way in their families and rule their wives—that is an inestimable privilege! In slavery the woman was far more important, and was in every way held higher than the man. Several speakers have been here who have advised the people to set the women in their proper place—never to tell them anything of their concerns, etc., etc.; and the notion of being bigger than women generally, is just now inflating the conceit of the males to an amazing degree. When women get the vote, too, no people will be more indignant than these, I suppose."²⁷

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855 The care of the children was divided between the mother and the plantation nurse, with the other children also doing their share of "minding child." When Captain Basil Hall visited a plantation near Charleston on his tour of the South in 1828 he found the mothers in the field at their work and "a sober old matron in charge of the three dozen shining urchins, collected together in a house near the center of the village. Over the fire hung a large pot of hominy, a preparation of Indian corn, making ready for the little folks' supper, and a very merry, happy-looking party they seemed."²⁸

(262) At all other times, the children were in the mother's care. It was not an uncommon sight to see a woman going about her home work with an infant tied securely to her back.

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867 Parents were severe in the discipline of their children, for they did not want their offspring to grow up to be "no-manners." They taught them to curtesy when approached by a white person and to hold out their hands to

²⁷ *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 184.

²⁸ Hall, *Travels in North America*, II, 210; *supra*, pp. 97-98.

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shake; to keep silent in the presence of elders and otherwise to show respect for age. Some of the missionaries who arrived on St. Helena Island shortly after the opening of the Civil War were indignant at the harsh treatment the children received at the hands of their parents. "I don't suppose these children ever received a caress or a word of tenderness since they were infants," wrote Arthur Sumner. "The children are invariably spoken to in harsh and peremptory tones by all grown niggers, and are whipped unmercifully on the least offence. Yet they are very obedient to their parents, and certainly stand much more in awe of adult darkies than they do of us mild-eyed missionaries."²⁰ Miss Towne concluded that parents were not really harsh to their children, but that their rough way of ordering them about, threatening to "skin um 'live" and to "bro'k um back," merely sounded savage. All visitors to the Sea Islands, either as guests of the master before the War or as missionaries, agreed that the children, despite the rough treatment from their parents and despite the fact that they seemed to have no games,²⁰ were a happy, carefree lot. Sir Charles Lyell thought the Hopeton plantation children had "such bright, happy faces when three or four years old, and from that age to ten or twelve . . . such frank and confiding manners, as to be very engaging."²¹ Yet all were horrified by the fact that their mothers permitted them to run about in summer completely nude, a practice which people of today, with their recent adoption of the sunbath theory, would be inclined to approve.

²⁰ Arthur Sumner Papers, St. Helena Island, July 9, 1863.

²¹ *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 192n.

²² Lyell, *Second Visit to the United States*, I, 263.

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Obviously, there was not the opportunity for home life in the slave family that there was in the free family, nor was meal time the institution that it was in the white family, for there was rarely to be found in the slave cabin a "family table."³³ Some observers of slave life thought also that there was little family affection among them. Edward S. Philbrick wrote to a friend that there was far less family affection and attachment among members of slave families than existed among the Irish peasants, adding, however, that he did not know "how much allowance to make for their being so much less demonstrative in their emotions, and more inured to suffering."³⁴

LEISURE TIME

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When task was done, the slave was his own master within the limits of plantation regulation. He might go home to work on his piece of ground, tend his pigs and chickens, play with his children, or fish in the creek. The slave had several ways of making money for his own use, in which he was encouraged by his master. As has already been pointed out, the black people ordinarily supplied their masters with chickens and eggs for which they usually received the market price.³⁵ They often sold their hogs and the truck from their garden patches; they wove baskets, and made boats and canoes. An overseer on the Butler plantation on St. Simon's Island said that he regularly allowed a certain number to go to town on Sundays

³³ Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Records*, sup., I, 304. "Except on Sundays, these people do not take their meals at a family table, but each one takes his hominy, bread, or potatoes sitting on the floor or on a bench, and at his own time. They say their masters never allowed them any regular time for meals." In this connection see *supra*, p. 137n.

³⁴ *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 15.

³⁵ *Supra*, p. 86.